



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE ABILITY OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS TO SPEAK ENGLISH*

By LOUIS BLOCH

I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak English on the part of the foreign-born population of the United States is a matter of paramount importance in connection with the problem of Americanization. In order that the immigrant groups may participate fully in the life and activities of the natives, or even of the older immigrant groups which have already adopted the language of the land as their medium of expression, it is essential that they learn to use the language of this country. It will be shown in the following pages that the necessity of learning to speak English confronts about 90 per cent of the European immigrants who come to the United States and that the problem is one which affects primarily, if not wholly, the first generation of immigrants. The data on ability to speak English in the censuses of 1900 and of 1910 have been analyzed in this article with a view to finding out the status of the foreign-born population in regard to ability to use the English language.

II. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

It is apparent from the data presented in Table I that the problem of speaking English is almost wholly one affecting the first generation

TABLE I
PERCENTAGE ATTENDING SCHOOL DURING 1909-10, BY AGE OF PERSON ATTENDING
(THIRTEENTH CENSUS, VOL. 1, p. 1100.)

Age	Native white			Foreign-born white
	Total	Native parentage	Foreign or mixed parentage	
6 years.....	55.5	52.6	62.9	55.5
7 years.....	79.2	77.2	84.3	76.9
8 years.....	86.7	85.2	90.5	84.2
9 years.....	89.5	88.3	92.4	87.5
10 years.....	93.2	92.2	95.7	90.3
11 years.....	93.8	92.9	96.1	91.4
12 years.....	93.1	92.0	95.6	90.2
13 years.....	91.9	90.9	94.3	87.7
14 years.....	84.7	85.3	83.1	71.6
15 years.....	71.5	75.0	63.5	46.2
16 years.....	53.7	58.9	41.8	23.7
17 years.....	38.0	42.9	26.7	12.2
18 years.....	25.1	28.6	16.9	6.8
19 years.....	16.3	18.5	11.1	4.8
20 years.....	9.8	11.0	6.8	3.0

* This subject is discussed by the writer in greater detail in *Bulletin No. 43* (mimeographed) of the Division of Information Service of the Carnegie Americanization Study.

of immigrants. Up to the age of 14 the percentages of native whites of foreign or mixed parentage attending school are higher than those of the native whites of native parentage. The native-born children of foreign-born parents go to school and learn to speak the English language. Above the age of 14 it will be seen that the difference in school attendance is in favor of the native whites of native parentage. Between the ages of 14 and 20 the proportion of the native whites of native parentage attending school ranges from 85.3 to 11.0 per cent as compared with percentages ranging from 83.1 to 6.8 for the native whites of foreign or mixed parentage.

It will be noticed that there is not much difference in school attendance between the foreign-born whites and the natives up to the age of 14, but that beginning with that age the difference is very marked in favor of the native whites. According to the census, "Economic conditions undoubtedly account in part for the lesser frequency of school attendance among the foreign-born of older ages. The fact that the foreign-born are concentrated in cities, where school attendance generally begins and ends at an earlier age than in rural districts, is doubtless also a factor. It should be borne in mind, however, that the pronounced decline in the proportion of school attendance among the foreign-born whites beginning at the age of 14 is not altogether caused by the fact that those in school leave at these ages, but is due in large part to the influx of immigrants of 14 years and over, who never go to school in the United States."*

The data as presented in the census do not reveal the kinds of schools attended by the respective nativity groups or the length of time school was attended. It is safe to assume, however, that only in a very small proportion of schools was the English language not taught and that the average length of time the individual attended school was sufficient to enable him to learn to speak English.

Since it is the native whites of foreign parentage and also the foreign-born whites under 14 years of age who generally attend school, it may be concluded that the problem of learning to speak English, as has already been said above, is one affecting primarily the first generation and largely those who are above the age of thirteen.

III. IMMIGRATION FROM ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The following table (Table II) shows that 10.6 per cent of all immigrants who arrived from Europe during the decade 1901-10 came from English-speaking countries, which means that only about 90 per cent of the immigrants arriving in the United States are faced with the

* The Thirteenth Census, General Report and Analysis, vol. 1, p. 1101.

problem of learning to speak English. This table does not take into consideration immigrants from countries other than Europe, such as Asia, Mexico, or from the British possessions. But since the data submitted below are confined to the foreign-born whites, and since the numbers arriving from countries other than Europe are comparatively small, the estimate of those unable to speak English upon arrival has been confined to the European immigrants.

TABLE II

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS WHO ARRIVED IN THE UNITED STATES FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM DURING 1901-10. (COMPUTED FROM U. S. IMMIGRATION COMMISSION STATISTICAL REVIEW OF IMMIGRATION, PP. 93-96.)

	Number	Per cent
Total from Europe	8,136,016	100.0
United Kingdom	865,015	10.6
England	388,017	4.8
Ireland	339,065	4.2
Scotland	120,469	1.5
Wales	17,464	.2

IV. CENSUS DATA ON INABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH†

In each of the last four censuses an inquiry as to ability to speak English was included in the population schedule. In taking the census of 1890 the enumerators were instructed to return as English speaking any person 10 years of age and over "able to speak English so as to be understood in ordinary conversation." The following table (Table III) from the Thirteenth Census shows the number and per cent of

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BOTH SEXES, FOR 1890, 1900, AND 1910. (CENSUS, 1910, VOL. 1, P. 1268.)

Census year	Foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over		
	Total	Unable to speak English	
		Number	Per cent
1910	12,944,529	2,953,011	22.8
1900	10,014,256	1,217,280	12.2
1890	8,786,887	1,371,044	15.6
Increase (or decrease)			
1900-10	2,930,273	1,735,731	142.6
1890-00	1,227,369	-153,764	-11.2

† It is important in studying the statistics of ability to speak English to bear in mind the distinction between the ratio of non-English speaking to the total foreign-born population and the ratio of non-English speaking to the total number of foreign-born of non-English-speaking races. The latter proportion

foreign-born whites unable to speak English at each of the three preceding censuses.

It appears from this table that the number unable to speak English more than doubled from 1900 to 1910 and that the number unable to speak English in 1890 was greater than the number reported unable to speak English in 1900. The Thirteenth Census makes the following comment upon this absolute and proportionate increase in the number unable to speak English in 1910: "The proportion of foreign-born whites unable to speak English was decidedly greater in 1910 than it was in 1900. . . . The increase during the decade in the number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over was 2,930,273, or 29.3 per cent; the increase in the number of that age unable to speak English was 1,735,731, or 142.6 per cent. Thus of the total increase in the number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over, during the decade 1900-10, persons unable to speak English constituted approximately three-fifths. In the decade 1890-00 the number of foreign-born whites unable to speak English decreased by 153,764, or 11.2 per cent. . . . The increases during the decade 1900-10. . . are perhaps the most significant figures to be derived from the census returns relating to inability to speak English. The rapid increase in the non-English speaking element of the foreign-born white population is a fact of very considerable social consequence. The explanation of this rapid increase is, of course, to be found in the character of recent immigration. In the foreign-born white population returned in 1910 as unable to speak English, the actual number of immigrants unable to speak English, who came into the country during the decade 1900-10, must, in fact, considerably exceed the increase since 1900 in the number of foreign-born whites unable to speak English, as shown by the census returns, since a considerable number among the foreign-born whites returned in 1900 as unable to speak English must have died or left the country, or learned to speak English during the decade 1900-10."*

An analysis of the statistics, however, leaves little room for doubt that

* Thirteenth Census, General Report and Analysis, vol. 1, pp. 1267-1268.

is, of course, higher than the former. Of the 13,345,545 foreign-born whites in the United States in 1910, 2,572,123 (computed from Thirteenth Census, Vol. 1, p. 879), or 19.3 per cent were from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Assuming that of these English-speaking races the proportions of those 10 years of age and over is the same as that of foreign-born whites of all races, namely, 97.0 per cent, the number of persons 10 years of age and over of the English-speaking races was 2,494,959. Deducting this number from the total number of foreign-born whites, 10 years of age and over, the remainder, 10,459,570, represents the number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over of the non-English-speaking races. The total number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over unable to speak English in 1910 was 2,953,011, or 28.2 per cent of the total number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over of the non-English-speaking races. The per cent of the total foreign-born 10 years of age and over unable to speak English is only 22.8. The differences for each of the states could be estimated by the same method.

the increase in the decade 1900-10 is not so much due to "the character of recent immigration" as it is to an understatement in the number unable to speak English in the census of 1900. If the increase in the volume of recent immigration is the cause of the increase in the per cent unable to speak English in 1910, as compared with 1900, then, as will be seen from the following table, the census of 1900, as compared with the census of 1890, should have shown an increase in the proportion unable to speak English.

TABLE IV

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES FROM NORTHERN AND WESTERN EUROPE, SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE, 1881-10. (ABSTRACTS OF REPORTS, VOL. 1, P. 64.)

Decade	Europe					
	Northern and Western		Southern and Eastern		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1881-90.....	3,779,315	79.7	959,951	20.3	4,739,266	100.0
1891-00.....	1,648,613	45.8	1,942,164	54.2	3,585,777	100.0
1901-10.....	1,910,700	23.3	6,302,709	76.7	8,213,409	100.0

Table IV shows that in the decade 1891-00 the immigration from southern and eastern Europe was more than double the amount of immigration from the same countries during the decade 1881-90. In spite of this fact the census (Table III) shows for 1900 a *decrease* in the proportion unable to speak English. It will be seen, on the other hand, that the total volume of immigration during the decade 1891-00 decreased by 1,153,489, or a decrease of about 24 per cent as compared with the decade 1881-90, and that the decrease was from northern and western Europe and not from southern and eastern Europe. During the decade 1881-90 the number of immigrants coming from northern and western Europe was 3,779,315, while the decade following the volume of immigration from these countries decreased by 2,130,702, or about 59 per cent. If the *character* of the immigration accounts for the variations in the proportions unable to speak English (Table III), it then follows that the smaller proportion of immigrants unable to speak English in 1900 was due to the decrease of immigration from northern and western Europe and the corresponding increase of immigration from southern and eastern Europe.

The tables next presented (Tables V and VI) throw considerable doubt on the reliability of the statistics of inability to speak English as shown in the census of 1900. An attempt has been made in Table V to correlate the increase in the number of foreign-born 10 years of

age and over with the increase in the number unable to speak English. From the forty-eight states and the District of Columbia only the states which are particularly illustrative of the point in question are selected for incorporation in this table. It will be seen, for instance, that in 1900 New Hampshire showed an increase of 16,453 in the number of foreign-born 10 years of age and over and a decrease of 203 in the number unable to speak English in the same age group. The increase in the number of foreign-born whites in New Hampshire, as in other states, resulted either from direct immigration from Europe or from migration from other states. Apparently this increase in the number of foreign-born in the state did not in the least increase the number unable to speak English in 1900 as compared with 1890, while in the decade 1900-10 a much smaller increase in the number of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over was accompanied by even greater increase in the number unable to speak English.

TABLE V

INCREASE OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES AND OF THOSE UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH,
10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, 1890-00 AND 1900-10, IN SELECTED STATES

State	Increase of foreign-born whites				Increase of foreign-born whites unable to speak English			
	1900-10		1890-00		1900-10		1890-00	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
New Hampshire.....	9,434	11.3	16,453	24.5	9,676	56.6	-203	-1.2
Massachusetts.....	203,786	24.9	190,265	30.4	94,377	123.1	22,604	41.8
New Jersey.....	216,083	51.4	105,380	33.4	105,152	215.0	7,802	19.0
Ohio.....	127,154	28.1	6,577	1.5	111,970	216.4	-13,740	-21.0
Indiana.....	15,194	10.8	-2,630	-1.8	29,392	259.2	-6,369	-36.0
Illinois.....	216,853	22.8	141,353	17.4	163,256	158.0	-28,023	-21.3
Wisconsin.....	-7,049	-1.4	8,724	1.7	33,868	39.0	-45,130	-34.2
Iowa.....	-33,980	-11.2	-11,148	-3.5	11,625	45.5	-25,427	-49.9
Washington.....	134,448	133.8	17,595	21.2	21,753	570.2	-1,885	-33.1
California.....	191,942	61.2	25,988	9.0	55,901	297.3	-5,413	-22.3

In the state of Illinois the number of foreign-born increased during 1890-00 by 141,353, but the number unable to speak English decreased by 28,023 during the same period; however, in the decade 1900-10 an increase of 216,853 in the number of foreign-born whites 10 years and over was accompanied by an increase of 163,256 in the number unable to speak English. During 1890-00 the increase of foreign-born in Illinois was 17.4 per cent, accompanied by a decrease of 21.3 per cent unable to speak English, while during 1900-10 the increase of 22.8 per cent of foreign-born was accompanied by an increase of 158 per cent of those unable to speak English. Again, in Wisconsin an increase of 8,724 in the number of foreign-born during 1890-00 was accompanied by a decrease of 45,130 in the number unable to speak English, while

in the next decade a *decrease* of 7,049 in the number of foreign-born was accompanied by an *increase* of 33,868 in the number unable to speak English. In Iowa the census figures also appear improbable. A decrease of 33,980 in the number of foreign-born, during the decade of 1900-10, was accompanied by an increase of 11,625 in the number unable to speak English, while during the preceding decade a decrease of 11,148 in the number of foreign-born was accompanied by a decrease of 25,427 in the number unable to speak English. The condition shown in Table V, though perhaps not impossible, certainly appears highly improbable.

Apparently the number unable to speak English in 1900 was understated by the census. The decreases for the United States as a whole and for the states separately in the number unable to speak English as shown in 1900 (Tables III and V), in spite of the large increase in the number of foreign-born, suggest inaccuracy in the figures on ability to speak English as given in the Twelfth Census. An examination of the schedule used in that census suggests the source of error. According to the official explanation, the column "Can speak English" was in 1900 included in the schedule "under the general heading 'Education,' together with three other columns covering, respectively, school attendance, ability to read, and ability to write. In tabulating the returns for 1900, it became evident that the number of negroes returned as unable to speak English, though not in itself large, was nevertheless almost certainly an overstatement, and an investigation led to the conclusion that errors had probably arisen from the arrangement of the columns of the schedule. In a great majority of cases for the whites, and in a large number of cases for the negroes, a correct return necessitated writing 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'Yes,' in answer, respectively, to the three inquiries, 'Can read,' 'Can write,' 'Can speak English.' The returns seemed to indicate that in the case of illiterate negroes enumerators had in some instances carelessly written 'No,' 'No,' 'No,' even when the illiterate person was in fact able to speak English. . . . Owing to the evidence of error in the returns the results of the tabulation for negroes were not included in the report for 1900, and in the tabulation for the negro population no comparison can be made of 1910 with 1900."*

Since in the case of negroes the enumerators had in some instances carelessly written "No," "No," "No," in answer to the three inquiries "Can read," "Can write," "Can speak English," it appears highly probable that enumerators often carelessly wrote "Yes," "Yes," "Yes," for the foreign-born whites in answer to the same inquiries. If this were the case, the number able to speak English among the foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over in 1900 would be about the

* Thirteenth Census, vol. 1, p. 1265.

same as the number of literates, while the number unable to speak English would be close to the number of illiterates. Table VI seems to justify this suspicion in regard to carelessness of enumerators in the case of foreign-born whites. The number unable to speak English in 1910 is almost twice as great as the number of illiterates in 1910, and in 1890 the number unable to speak English exceeded the number of illiterates by 223,473.

TABLE VI

FOREIGN-BORN WHITES TEN YEARS OF AGE AND OVER ILLITERATE AND UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, 1890, 1900, AND 1910. (U. S. CENSUS, 1910, VOL. 1, PP. 1213, 1277.)

Year	Total foreign-born 10 years of age and over	Illiterates		Unable to speak English	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1910.....	12,944,529	1,650,361	12.7	2,953,011	22.8
1900.....	10,014,256	1,287,135	12.9	1,217,280	12.2
1890.....	8,786,887	1,147,571	13.1	1,371,044	15.6

But in 1900 the reverse is shown, the number of illiterates exceeding by 69,855 the number of those unable to speak English. There seems to be no other explanation for the excess of illiterates over the number unable to speak English in 1900 than that the number of the latter was understated in the Twelfth Census. The proportion of illiterates in the total foreign-born population 10 years of age and over in 1910 was almost half that of the proportion unable to speak English. In 1890, 15.6 per cent of the foreign-born population could not speak English and 13.1 per cent were illiterates. In 1900 the respective proportions unable to speak English and illiterate in the foreign-born population 10 years of age and over were very nearly the same. Of the immigrants arriving in the United States the number unable to speak English at the time of arrival greatly exceeds the number of illiterates, which accounts for the greater numbers of illiterates in 1910 as compared with preceding decades. Immigration during the decade 1891-00, as shown in Table IV, more closely resembled in character the immigration during the decade 1901-10 than that during the decade 1881-90; consequently, the difference between the proportions of illiterates and of those unable to speak English in 1900 should be nearer the difference in 1910 than in 1890.

Thus analyzed, the data presented in Tables IV and V seem to warrant the conclusion that the number unable to speak English was understated in the Twelfth Census and that consequently no comparison can safely be attempted between the number unable to speak English in 1910 and in 1900.

V. FOREIGN-BORN UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, 1910

The arrangement of the schedule in 1900, referred to above, was changed so that the cause for the error which was apparently made in 1900 was removed in the census following. The table next presented (Table VII) shows the condition in respect to inability to speak English

TABLE VII

PER CENT OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER OF TOTAL WHITE POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER; AND PER CENT OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES, AND OF TOTAL WHITES 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, BY STATES

State	Whites 10 years and over	Foreign-born whites 10 years and over	Foreign-born whites unable to speak English, 1910	Per cent foreign-born of total whites 10 and over	Per cent unable to speak English	
					of foreign-born	of total white
United States	64,262,348	12,944,529	2,953,011	20.2	22.8	4.6
Arizona	155,968	43,724	25,072	28.0	57.3	16.0
Texas	2,341,815	224,580	125,765	9.6	56.0	5.4
New Mexico	239,646	21,235	11,776	8.8	55.5	4.9
West Virginia	852,897	54,646	27,461	6.4	50.3	3.2
Florida	330,978	32,155	14,049	9.7	43.7	4.2
Pennsylvania	5,846,624	1,390,564	466,825	23.8	33.6	8.0
New Hampshire	353,638	92,976	26,783	26.3	28.8	7.8
Delaware	138,303	16,940	4,824	12.2	28.5	3.5
Ohio	3,754,837	579,274	163,722	15.4	28.3	4.4
Indiana	2,109,755	155,596	40,731	7.3	26.2	1.9
New Jersey	1,953,369	636,848	153,861	32.6	24.2	7.8
Wisconsin	1,827,311	502,591	120,665	27.5	24.0	6.6
Louisiana	688,126	50,333	11,547	7.3	22.9	1.7
Illinois	4,400,806	1,168,559	266,557	26.6	22.8	6.6
New York	7,294,978	2,634,578	597,012	36.1	22.7	8.2
Wyoming	115,561	26,381	5,970	22.8	22.6	5.2
North Dakota	424,184	150,451	33,491	35.4	22.3	7.9
Kansas	1,277,020	131,673	28,358	10.3	21.5	2.2
Rhode Island	432,152	171,904	36,961	39.8	21.5	8.6
Oklahoma	1,096,319	39,064	7,975	3.6	20.4	.7
Connecticut	888,428	318,780	64,201	35.9	20.1	7.2
Nevada	69,353	17,787	3,557	25.6	20.0	5.1
		98,334	18,486	22.2	18.8	4.2
South Dakota	442,769					
Maine	602,227	105,336	19,589	17.5	18.6	3.2
Colorado	630,856	123,026	22,610	19.5	18.4	3.6
Michigan	2,221,695	579,803	102,286	26.1	17.6	4.6
Vermont	287,682	47,654	8,342	16.6	17.5	2.9
Maryland	843,496	100,951	17,544	12.0	17.4	2.1
Nebraska	917,307	172,497	29,519	18.8	17.1	3.2
Missouri	2,246,215	223,573	37,747	9.1	16.9	1.5
Massachusetts	2,710,966	1,020,594	171,014	37.6	16.8	6.3
Minnesota	1,622,269	533,915	89,850	32.9	16.8	5.5
Arkansas	807,078	16,454	2,741	2.0	16.7	.3
Alabama	879,219	18,291	3,028	2.1	16.6	.3
Mississippi	565,329	9,046	1,491	1.6	16.5	.3
Virginia	1,039,879	25,639	3,983	2.5	15.5	.4
Montana	301,918	89,456	13,718	29.6	15.3	4.5
California	1,988,999	505,312	74,706	25.4	14.8	3.7
Idaho	248,440	39,619	5,805	15.9	14.7	2.3
Iowa	1,747,906	269,246	37,169	15.4	13.8	2.1
North Carolina	1,088,200	5,734	779	.5	13.6	(a)*
Oregon	554,272	100,759	13,531	18.2	13.4	2.4
Utah	273,752	61,840	8,129	22.6	13.1	3.0
Washington	928,039	234,928	25,568	25.3	10.9	3.8
Kentucky	1,512,616	39,571	3,816	2.6	9.6	.3
Tennessee	1,260,516	17,985	1,648	1.4	9.2	.1
South Carolina	494,097	5,911	447	1.2	7.6	(a)
Georgia	1,038,916	14,656	953	1.4	6.5	(a)
District of Columbia	199,124	26,755	1,349	11.9	5.7	.7

* (a) Less than one-tenth of one per cent.

within the separate states in 1910. It will be seen that for the country as a whole the per cent of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over unable to speak English was 22.8 per cent of the total foreign-born white population of that age group, and 4.6 per cent of the total white population 10 years of age and over. Thirteen states showed percentages unable to speak English above the percentage for the United States, varying from 57.3 per cent in Arizona to 22.9 per cent in Louisiana. The five states (Arizona to Florida) which show the largest proportions unable to speak English have 2.9 per cent of the total foreign-born whites* of the United States and 6.9 per cent of the total foreign-born unable to speak English in the country. The seventeen states (from Pennsylvania to Nevada) showing proportions of the foreign-born unable to speak English from one-fifth to about one-third, contain the greatest bulk of the foreign-born and of those unable to speak English. Table VIII shows the distribution of the foreign-born of the total white population and of those unable to speak English in the three groups of states. It will be seen (Table VII) that in the third group (from South Dakota to the District of Columbia) the proportions of those unable to speak English range from 18.4 per cent to as low as 5.7 per cent.

TABLE VIII

DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL WHITE POPULATION AND OF THE FOREIGN-BORN WHITE POPULATION, 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, AND OF THOSE UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BY GROUPS OF STATES

	Arizona to Florida (5 states)	Pennsylvania to Nevada (17 states)	South Dakota to District of Columbia (26 states)	United States
Total white population 10 years of age and over	7,921,304	32,670,764	27,669,783	64,261,851
Total foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over	376,340	8,084,299	4,483,890	12,944,529
Total unable to speak English	204,123	2,033,040	715,848	2,953,011
Per cent of whites 10 years and over of total in U. S. 10 years and over	6.1	50.8	43.0	99.9
Per cent of foreign-born whites of total foreign-born whites in United States	2.9	62.4	34.6	99.9
Per cent unable to speak English of total unable to speak English in United States	6.9	68.8	24.2	99.9

It is seen from Table VII that in thirty-four states and in the District of Columbia the proportion of foreign-born unable to speak English is lower than for the country as a whole and that in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Florida the proportions of non-English speaking are so much above the average for the United States as to present a separate problem.

* Unless otherwise specified the terms *foreign-born whites*, *total white population*, and *white population* are here meant to include only those 10 years of age and over.

VI. CONCENTRATION OF FOREIGN-BORN NO HINDRANCE IN LEARNING TO
SPEAK ENGLISH

From Table IX it will be seen that the states which show the greatest concentration of foreign-born do not show the highest proportions of foreign-born unable to speak English. In Rhode Island, for instance, 39.8 per cent of the total white population 10 years of age and over is foreign-born, but the proportion of foreign-born unable to speak English is only 21.5 per cent, which is somewhat below the average for the country. Massachusetts, with a high proportion of foreign-born, shows a comparatively low proportion unable to speak English. In New York, where 36.1 per cent of the total white population is foreign-born, the proportion unable to speak English is not quite so high as for the United States. On the other hand, it will be seen from Table VII that in some of the states which show low percentages of foreign-born in the total white population, the proportions unable to speak English are higher than for the states shown in Table IX. Omitting such extreme cases as Texas, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Florida, it will be seen that Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, and Louisiana show proportions unable to speak English above the average for the country. In Kansas and in Oklahoma, where the proportion of foreign-born of the total white population is low, the proportion unable to speak English

TABLE IX
PER CENT OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER OF TOTAL WHITE
POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, AND PER CENT UNABLE TO SPEAK
ENGLISH OF THE FOREIGN-BORN WHITES AND OF THE TOTAL WHITE POPU-
LATION, FOR CERTAIN STATES

State	Per cent foreign-born of total population 10 years of age and over	Per cent foreign-born unable to speak Eng- lish of foreign-born 10 years of age and over	Per cent foreign-born unable to speak Eng- lish of total white population 10 years of age and over
Rhode Island.....	39.8	21.5	8.6
Massachusetts.....	37.6	16.8	6.3
New York.....	36.1	22.7	8.2
Connecticut.....	35.9	20.1	7.2
North Dakota.....	35.4	22.3	7.9
Minnesota.....	32.9	16.8	5.5
New Jersey.....	32.6	24.2	7.8
Montana.....	29.6	15.3	4.5
Arizona.....	28.0	57.3	16.0
Wisconsin.....	27.5	24.0	6.6
Illinois.....	26.6	22.8	6.6
New Hampshire.....	26.3	28.8	7.8
Michigan.....	26.1	17.6	4.6
Nevada.....	25.6	20.0	5.1
California.....	25.4	15.8	3.7
Washington.....	25.3	10.9	3.8
Pennsylvania.....	23.8	33.6	8.0
Wyoming.....	22.8	22.6	5.2
Utah.....	22.6	13.1	3.0
South Dakota.....	22.2	18.8	4.2
United States.....	20.2	22.8	4.6

is higher than in such states as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Montana, Michigan and others in which the proportions of foreign-born of the total white population are high. From these data it appears that the concentration of immigrants does not act as a hindrance in their learning to speak English, but, on the contrary, seems to have an effect in the opposite direction.

VII. INABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH GREATEST IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The next table (Table X) shows that in rural communities the percentage of foreign-born unable to speak English is higher than it is in urban communities. Of the total foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over in urban communities, 21.9 per cent were non-English speaking, while of the total rural foreign-born population of that age the non-English speaking were 25.2 per cent. The proportion for each specified class of urban communities is lower in every case than it is for rural communities.

Of the foreign-born whites unable to speak English, 2,042,881, or 69.2 per cent, were living in urban communities, of which number 833,404, or 40.8 per cent, were living in cities of 500,000 inhabitants or more.

The fact that in urban communities the proportion unable to speak English is lower than in rural communities shows, as has already been pointed out (Tables VII and IX), that the concentration of foreign-born does not retard their learning to speak English, but on the contrary seems to have the opposite effect. This may be due to better educational facilities in the cities as well as to a greater association between older and newer immigrants in organizations or in industrial establishments, or to wider association generally between immigrants and natives in urban communities.

TABLE X
FOREIGN-BORN WHITES UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BY CLASS OF COMMUNITY.
(THIRTEENTH CENSUS, VOL. 1, P. 1273.)

Class of community	Foreign-born white population 10 years of age and over, 1910		
	Total	Unable to speak English	
		Number	Per cent
Total	12,944,529	2,953,011	22.8
Urban communities	9,331,994	2,042,881	21.9
Places of 2,500 to 25,000	2,093,984	498,955	23.8
Places of 25,000 to 500,000	3,499,863	710,522	20.3
Places of 500,000 and over	3,738,147	833,404	22.3
Rural communities	3,612,535	910,130	25.2

VIII. INABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BY SEX

The Thirteenth Census* shows that for the country as a whole there is but a slight difference between males and females—a difference of four-tenths of one per cent in favor of the females. In the North and the West the proportions for the females are lower than for the males, while in the South the reverse is true. In three of the nine geographic divisions, namely, New England, West North Central, and West South Central, the proportions of females unable to speak English are higher than of the males. In the other six divisions the males show higher proportions unable to speak English. Of the total foreign-born white population 21 years of age and over, 22 per cent were unable to speak English in 1910 as compared with 22.8 per cent of the foreign-born white population 10 years of age and over. The proportion of total foreign-born whites 21 years of age and over unable to speak English was the same for both sexes.†

IX. INABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH, BY AGE GROUPS

Table XI shows the proportions of those unable to speak English in each of the eight age groups for which data are available. It will be observed that the highest proportion of non-English speaking is found (with the exception of the group “age unknown”) in the 20- to 24-age group.

TABLE XI
FOREIGN-BORN WHITES UNABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH IN 1910, BY AGE GROUPS, BOTH SEXES. (COMPUTED FROM CENSUS 1910, VOL. 1, PP. 322, 324, 1281.)

Age group	Total	Unable to speak English	
		Number	Per cent
10 years and over.....	12,944,529	2,953,011	22.8
10-14 years.....	358,330	56,405	15.7
15-19 years.....	673,761	227,649	33.8
20-24 years.....	1,430,381	497,511	34.8
25-34 years.....	3,168,411	902,949	28.5
35-44 years.....	2,711,568	538,798	19.1
45-54 years.....	2,071,415	324,865	15.7
55-64 years.....	1,321,103	192,488	14.6
65 and over.....	1,183,349	201,709	17.0
Age unknown.....	26,211	10,637	40.6

It was shown in Table I that beginning with age 14 the proportions of foreign-born whites attending school are considerably smaller than of the native whites and that these proportions keep declining steadily and sharply to the age of 20, at which age only 3.0 per cent of the for-

* Thirteenth Census, vol. 1, p. 1271.

† Thirteenth Census, vol. 1, p. 1271.

eign-born whites were attending school in 1909-10. Table XI shows that the greatest proportions of those unable to speak English are found within the ages of 15 to 34. The higher proportions of inability to speak English found in these age groups are very probably due to the fact that most immigrants arrive at these ages and that very few of them attend school. The steady decline downward in the proportions of those unable to speak English from the age group 25 to 34 to the ages 65 and over is no doubt due to the fact that a large proportion of the immigrants of the more advanced ages have been in the country long enough to have learned to speak English without schooling. It seems certain that if our educational institutions could reach the foreign-born between the ages of 15 to 34 (or even 15 to 24) they would not only reduce the proportions unable to speak English within these age groups but they would at the same time, of course, reduce the proportions of non-English speaking in the higher age groups.

The higher proportions of those unable to speak English at the ages of 65 and over are not significant for the reason that persons of that age do not generally participate actively in the life of the community.

X. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing analysis of the data presented seems to warrant the following conclusions:

1. The problem of learning to speak English is one affecting only the first generation and about ninety per cent of our immigration.
2. The census data of 1900 on inability to speak English among the foreign-born are evidently inaccurate, and consequently no comparison can safely be attempted with these data.
3. The greatest number of those unable to speak English in 1910 is found in seventeen states (Tables VII and VIII, Pennsylvania to Nevada). Of the remaining thirty-one states, five (Arizona to Florida) show exceptionally high proportions of those unable to speak English. Within the remaining twenty-six states and the District of Columbia the proportions unable to speak English are comparatively low.
4. The states which show a very high proportion of foreign-born whites 10 years of age and over of the total white population of the same age group, or, in other words, the states which show great concentration of foreign-born do not show correspondingly high proportions of those unable to speak English, while on the other hand many states having a small ratio of foreign-born to the total population show higher proportions of those unable to speak English. Likewise, urban communities show lower proportions of those unable to speak English than do rural communities. It may be concluded, therefore, that concen-

tration of immigrants does not act as a deterrent in learning English, but seems to have an effect in the opposite direction.

5. The gradual decrease from the younger to the older age groups in the proportions of those unable to speak English, beginning with the ages 25 to 34, shows that a knowledge of spoken English comes naturally with increased length of residence in the country.

6. If effective measures could be taken to teach English to foreigners between the ages of 15 and 19, or between 15 and 24, the greatest number of non-English speaking would be reached and thereby the proportions of those unable to speak English would naturally be considerably reduced in the succeeding ages.

7. Exceptional socio-economic forces calling for special attention and study are in operation within the states showing very high proportions of non-English speaking foreign-born whites. (Table VIII.)